A BRIEF DISSERTATION ON JOHN III. 5.

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A DISSERTATION

ON

JOHN XXII.'s OPINION

A BRIEF DISSERTATION ON JOHN III. 5.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a Man BE BORN OF WATER, *and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*

THIS Text is commonly understood, and alledged as a Proof, of the general Necessity of *Water-Baptism*; but, as I apprehend, without Reason: For our blessed Saviour seems to explain himself in the Verse immediately following, when he saith, *ver.* 6. *That which is* BORN OF

THE FLESH, *is Fleſh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit* —— That, which in the former Verſe, is called *born of Water*, is here in the very next Verſe ſaid to be *born of the Fleſh*. Perhaps, therefore, the Term WATER, is meant (with Reverence be it ſpoken!) only of the ordinary Method and *Means* of Generation. —— And what ſeems to confirm this Conjecture is, that this ſame Evangeliſt expreſſes the ſame thing in plain Terms, in his firſt Chapter, at the 13th Verſe; *Which were born* (ſaith he) *not of* BLOOD, *nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God* —— That, which is called, *John* iii. 5. *Water*, in the next Verſe, is named *Fleſh*, John i. 13. *Blood*; and, by St. PETER, 1 Epiſt. i. 23d Verſe, it is ſtiled expreſly *corruptible Seed*. For, this Text of St. PETER, ſeems very near of kin to that in debate.

Beſides

Beſides — this Interpretation ſeems to ſuit much better with the whole Thread of our Saviour's Diſcourſe in this Place — NICODEMUS had asked our Saviour, very probably " How " muſt a Man be qualified in order to " enter into the Kingdom of God? " Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid unto him, " verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except " a Man *be born again*, he cannot ſee " the Kingdom of God. *Nicodemus* " ſaid unto him, how can a Man be " *born when he is old?* Can he enter " a ſecond time into his *Mother's* " *Womb*, and be born? Jeſus replied, " no! He muſt be *born* of the Spirit, " as well as *in the natural Way*; " otherwiſe he will not, cannot enter " into the Kingdom of God. Could " a Man be born ever ſo often in the " groſs Senſe you underſtand me in, " this could profit him nothing; be- " cauſe that which is born of the " Fleſh, is but Fleſh ſtill; but that

" which is born of the Spirit, is Spi-
" rit, *i. e.* your being the *natural*
" *Deſcendant* of ABRAHAM (could you
" be ſo ten thouſand times over) is
" not of itſelf ſufficient, but you
" muſt alſo *be renewed in the Spirit*
" *of your Mind*, in order to inherit
" the Bleſſings of the promiſed Seed,
" *&c.*"

The general Stream of Interpreters, antient and modern, is for the common Interpretation, except GROTIUS and EPISCOPIUS only *, that I know of: Theſe two have conjectured, that our Lord did not ſpeak *expreſly* in this Place of BAPTISM, only that he *alluded* to it. I don't think there is ſo much, as an *Alluſion* to this RITE in the Text, for the Reaſons given before; which, however, I offer only *problematically*.

Inter-

* That Notion of *Calvin* and his Followers, that there is a Ἐπιδιανοία, as it is called, in theſe Words, is ſo evidently wrong I think at ſight, that I have purpoſely omitted taking any Notice of it.

Interpreters and Commentators generally follow one another in a String, without much Inquiry, or rigid Examination: And, with *moſt* Men, an Interpretation's being *old* only, is ſufficient warrant for believing that to be the *true* one; and, its being *new*, more than Reaſon ſufficient to reject it. — But I was caſt in another Kind of Mould, and never conſider the *Antiquity* ſo much, as the *Weight* of the Reaſons, brought to ſupport any Opinion or Interpretation.

Beſides — in this Caſe, I think, I can point out what led Men at firſt into that which is the *current* Interpretation. It was, — their careleſly ſuppoſing TITUS, iii. 5. to be exactly Parallel to JOHN iii. 5. *According to his Mercy he ſaved us by the Waſhing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.* — *The Waſhing of Regeneration*, was ſuppoſed to anſwer to being

being *born of Water*, as *Renewing of the Holy Ghoſt* does to being *born of the Spirit*; and thus, without further Inquiry, this Text, in the *Epiſtle* to TITUS, was determined to be an Expoſition of that in ST. JOHN's *Goſpel*. Whereas I apprehend the Text in the *firſt Epiſtle* of ST. PETER, referred to before, and that in the firſt Chapter of this ſame Evangeliſt, to be more exactly ſimilar to that, whoſe Meaning is in Queſtion; for, put them all together, and ſee! how exactly they tally with each other.

Except a Man be BORN OF WATER, *and of the Spirit*, &c. *.

That which is BORN OF THE FLESH, *is Fleſh, and that which is born of the Spirit*, &c. †.

Which were BORN *not* OF BLOOD, *but of God* ††.

Being

* John iii. 5. † John iii. 6. †† John i. 13.

Being BORN *again not of* CORRUPTIBLE SEED, *but of incorruptible*, &c. *.

And what now hath the *Waſhing of Regeneration* to compare with this? — But *Water* and *Waſhing* are Correlates, and therefore one muſt neceſſarily be an Interpretation of the other!

* 1 Peter i. 23.

Diluuntur

Diluuntur Objectiones.

Obj. 1. THIS Interpretation tends to deprive the Church of a moſt valuable Proof of the general Neceſſity of *Water-Baptiſm*; and, therefore, it ought not to be received.

Anſw. Whether this Interpretation be worthy of Reception or not, is not for me to ſay; but its worth, in my Opinion, is to be eſtimated in a very different Way from that in the Objection. — Beſides, if the common be the only true Interpretation of the Text under debate, it proves not only the *general*, but the *abſolute* Neceſſity of BAPTISM; and I need not mention what is the deſerved Fate of Arguments, that prove *too much*.

I obſerve

I obſerve further, that in all controverted Points, the beſt and ſafeſt Way is, to reſt your own Doctrine upon Texts of Scripture, which are *plain*, and of undeniable Signification, *v. gr.* was I engaged in Controverſy with one of the People called QUAKERS, and by him put upon the Proof from Scripture, of the general Neceſſity and Obligation of *Water-Baptiſm*, I would produce, not the Text under our preſent Conſideration (even ſuppoſing I adhered to the common Interpretation) for the Reaſon juſt now hinted at; but I would rather produce, together with the Words of Inſtitution, *Acts* x. 47, 48. wherein ST. PETER urges the *Expediency* of WATER-BAPTISM even to thoſe who had received a moſt plentiful and viſible Effuſion of the HOLY GHOST. So that ſuppoſing the Pretenſions of the *Quakers* to be true (for Argument's Sake) concerning their *inward Light*, &c. yet from hence

hence it appears abundantly evident, that they ought to ſubmit to *Water-Baptiſm*; becauſe ST. PETER commanded *Cornelius* and his Family to be *baptized*, after the HOLY GHOST was poured out upon them in ſo ſenſible a Manner, that *they were heard to ſpeak with Tongues, and magnify God.*

Obj. 2. But does not this Interpretation ſeem *forced*, by tranſverſing the Words from the Order in which they ſtand in the Text.

Anſw. The like exactly is done by our Tranſlators, without any the leaſt Imputation or Suſpicion of forcing the Text, *Deut.* xx. 8. which in the *Septuagint* ſtands thus — ἵνα μὴ δειλιάῃ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, *leſt his Brethren's Heart faint* (it ſtands in our Tranſlation, or more properly, *leſt he terrify his Brother's Heart*) *as well*

well as his Heart; ἐὰν μὴ τὶς γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, *unleſs a Man be born of the Spirit, as well as in the natural Way.* And now! what *forcing* is this? — There is indeed no more *Force* in the Caſe, than in tranſlating ἐὰν μὴ *niſi*, rather than *ſi non*: So likewiſe, 2 *Sam.* vi. 19. which in the *Septuagint* ſtands thus — ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς ἕως γυναικός, is by our Tranſlators rendered, without any the leaſt Suſpicion of *Force*, *as well to the Women as to the Men*: Compare 1 *Chron.* xxv. 8. and 2 *Chron.* xxxi. 15. which may indifferently be rendered *to the great as well as to the ſmall*, or *to the ſmall as well as to the great*, either of which will do in either Place.

Obj. 3. But does the Word ὕδωρ, occur any where in Scripture in this Senſe?

Anſw. Whether it doth or no, there is ſomething vaſtly like it *Prov.*

v. 15.

v. 15. Πίνε ὕδατα ἀπὸ σῶν ἀγγείων; κ. τ. λ. *Drink Waters out of thine own Ciſtern*, &c. So again, *ver.* 18. of the ſame Chapter, ἡ πηγή σε τῦ ὕδατος ἔστω σοὶ ἰδία, καὶ συνευφραίνε μετὰ γυναικὸς τῆς ἐκ νεότητός σου. *Let thy Fountain*, &c. ſtrongly alludes to this Meaning. In like Manner, *Prov.* ix. 17. *Stolen* WATERS *are ſweet*, &c. hath a plain Reference to this Meaning, *vid. Gr.* and the following Verſe, as it ſtands in the *Septuagint* —— Again, *Pſalm* lxviii. 26. *Bleſs ye God in the Congregations, even the Lord from the* FOUNTAIN *of Iſrael*, is thus paraphraſed by Biſhop PATRICK, Bleſs the Lord all ye, that are the *Offſpring* of *Iſrael* — Again, *Numer.* xxiv. 7. *He ſhall pour the* WATER *out of his Buckets.* &c. [this is literally tranſlated from the *Hebrew*, whereas] the *Septuagint* Verſion is, Ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῦ σπέρματος αὐτῦ, κ. τ. λ. — But what comes up exactly to the Point, and ſhews the *Greek* Word ὕδωρ, to be uſed in that Senſe, as well as

the

the *Hebrew* מים is the next Text I ſhall produce. —— *Iſaiah* xlviii. 1. *Hear ye this O Houſe of* Jacob! *which are called by the Name of* Iſrael, *and are come forth out of the* WATERS *of* Judah, Οι ἐξ ὕδατος Ιούδα ἐξελθόντες, which are come forth out of the Waters of *Judah! i. e.* which are the Poſterity of *Judah*; or, in other Words, which are *born of* Jewiſh *Water*. For Οι ἐξ ὕδατος Ιούδα ἐξελθόντες, & Οι ἐξ ὕδατος Ιούδα γεννηθέντες, are Phraſes of exactly the ſame Import, and may indifferently be uſed, either one or the other, or one for the other, juſt as the Writer is pleaſed to make Choice of either Word.

The E N D.

the Verses in the next Text I
shall produce. Isaiah xlviii. 1.
Hear ye this, O House of Jacob! which
are called by the Name of Israel, and
are come forth out of the Waters of
Judah, or, as the Hebrew, which
are come forth out of the Waters of
Judah; i. e. which are the Posterity
of Judah; or, in other Words, which
are born of Jewish Parents. For Ori-
ginals like Copies, or Originals, are Pluries of exactly the
same Import, and may indifferently be
used, either one or the other, or one
for the other, just as the Writer is
pleased to make Choice of either Word.

THE END.